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A Story of Rape: One Woman's Account of Sexual Assault on Campus

By Katie Schafer

The clock on the cluttered bedside table read nearly noon before Shaye felt Jason stirring in the sheets beside her. As the harsh daylight spilled through the room's sheer curtains, her eyes burned from lack of sleep. When Jason finally rolled over to face her, Shaye hurried to wipe her tearstained cheeks.

Without a word, he sat up, pulled his boxers up over his hips, and clumsily navigated his way to the bathroom. Shaye fumbled to find her clothes amongst the heaps on the floor and managed to dress her sticky body before Jason appeared again.

"You ready to go?" Jason blankly inquired as he tugged his T-shirt over his messy hair. Shaye nodded her head accordingly. Her puffy eyes fell to the floor to dodge his prying stare as she lifted herself from the bed. She was too disgusted to look at him.

In between shifting gears his cold fingers again crept up her leg. Shaye's stomach lurched. She squeezed her eyes tightly, turned to the window, and fought back the tightening in her throat. She opened her eyes when the car finally stopped.

"I had a really good time last night." Jason grabbed Shaye's wrist and pulled her back into the car. "I'll call you tomorrow," he said before forcing a dry kiss on her mouth.

Shaye, whose name has been changed for this story, never went to the police about what happened to her that night. In fact, it took her two months to finally tell her best friend.

According to national crime reports and Planned Parenthood, rape is the most underreported crime. In Virginia, it is estimated that only one out of every six rapes are reported to police. Of those Virginia attacks reported, 83 percent knew their attackers.

"Not only did I know him, I initially really liked him," Shaye shook her head as she reflected on her attacker. "The scariest part is knowing he didn't think what he did was wrong."

They had met at a party the night before. Shaye and a friend had competed against him in beer pong. They flirted over the loud music and Jason invited her to a party at his apartment the following night. He said goodnight and left her with a charming kiss on the forehead. On the way

home, Shaye had divulged to her friend that she could tell that he was different.

She was so anxious to impress him that she took three hours to get ready that night, paying special attention to details. She curled her hair and painted her fingernails. Shaye borrowed a pink satin camisole from her roommate; she wanted to make sure that she looked “sexy but not easy.”

Because she had taken so long to get ready, it was almost 11 p.m. before she arrived at the party. Jason greeted her as soon as she walked in the door with an elated smile and two Solo cups.

“You look beautiful,” he had said. And she beamed. “But you have to catch up! We’ve all been drinking since 8!”

He offered her one of the cups and took her hand. The night advanced very similarly to the night before; they played several drinking games, flirted and Jason stayed by Shaye’s side the entirety of the night. He eagerly sought her kiss for every shot she made during beer pong.

As the party began to thin, Shaye realized that her options for making it home were limited. She was feeling the effects of the alcohol too heavily to drive or walk home by herself. The buses had stopped running and she could not think of any of her friends that were sober that night to come pick her up.

“Why don’t you just stay with me?” Jason propositioned. Why shouldn’t she stay? She really liked him, and spending the night did not automatically equate to engaging in sex.

“I’m only staying because you’re my last resort,” Shaye teased as she followed him to the bedroom. He turned off the lights, and after a few moments their conversation was reduced to short sentences between kisses.

“I’m not having sex with you,” Shaye had said when things started to get heated. She was smiling, but sincere.

“Is that a challenge?”

“No, I’m serious. It’s just too soon and I’m not that kind of girl.”

“I never said that you were. If you don’t want sex, we won’t have any.”

They continued to kiss and pet heavily, but Shaye began to feel uneasy when he got more aggressive. Things began to change, and she no longer felt the hot and heaviness that she had earlier. She said no when he began to unbutton her pants, but he continued. She said no again and tried to sit upright.

“Please,” he urged. But she knew he was not asking for permission. He pushed her down on the pillow and forced her jeans and panties off.

He suddenly released the pressure on her body and stood up. “I’ll be right back,” and he left the room.

Shaye stared at the ceiling and her mind began to race. Her breathing had quickened and she rolled over to search for her pants in the darkness. She began to panic. She could not find them. She stopped searching when Jason reappeared. His new demeanor frightened her.

She heard herself telling him no, but he pushed her back on the bed. He was in between her legs. He held Shaye down with her hands above her head. And then his penis was inside of her. Shaye turned her face, squeezed her eyes closed and tried to move her body toward the bed’s headboard. She writhed under his pressure on her wrists.

“Please don’t, please!” It was only a whisper, but it was the only utterance Shaye could manage. It was a plea, and she knew that he heard. Their eyes met. When the moonlight through the window hit Jason’s face, Shaye saw someone she did not know. All she could see in his eyes was greed.

She let her hands drop and tears rolled down the sides of her face. She tried to let the darkness swallow her up until he finished. When Jason finally got off of her and left the room, Shaye moved to the far side of the bed to face the wall. She continued to quietly cry and she felt him back in the bed with her. She could not stand to look at him. Jason snuggled up to her and rubbed her back until he fell asleep. Her body was so paralyzed with fear and confusion that she just laid there and cried until morning.

“After it happened, my mind just couldn’t catch up with me,” Shaye said about that night. “I wasn’t even sure what had just happened to me.”

Most college females in Shaye’s situation would not understand what to do afterwards either. However, on the Virginia Tech campus, there is an organization that promotes education on the topic.

S.A.V.E.S., Sexual Assault and Violence Education by Students, is a student organization that strives to raise awareness of sexual assault and violence through outreach and education. In reaching out to the surrounding community, S.A.V.E.S. attempts to create a safe and accepting environment throughout the Blacksburg and Virginia Tech community.

The S.A.V.E.S. peer educators are a group of specially trained students, men and women, who develop anti-violence programs and presentations and provide education and outreach to the Virginia Tech community about sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and cyberstalking.

“[S.A.V.E.S.] has given me the chance to be trained and educated on tons of issues and be able to share that education with my peers, faculty and staff,” said founding member, Lauren Kiger. “We’ve even started reaching further into the community by giving presentations to schools throughout Blacksburg and Roanoke.”

Members attend two full-day interactive trainings per year and volunteer two hours per week at the Women’s Center, which sponsors the organization. Peer educators commit to weekly

meetings and to facilitate at least four presentations to other campus groups throughout the semester.

“Members are very interested in promoting violence awareness on campus,” explained sophomore member Ashley Ferguson. “You have to be passionate about what you do in order to make people listen and make a difference.”

The current peer educators admitted to learning a lot since becoming S.A.V.E.S. members. “S.A.V.E.S. has really opened my eyes to the fact that sexual assault and violence, in general, are real and everyday events in our society and at Virginia Tech,” Kiger stated. Frighteningly enough, she continued, “The majority of cases are carried out by acquaintances of victims.”

After all, Jason had been someone Shaye knew and trusted enough to stay the night with him. But according to the 2004 National Crime Victimization survey, Shaye’s story is not an uncommon event. It is estimated that 67 percent of female rape victims are acquainted with their assailant.

“S.A.V.E.S. has pretty much been one of the best experiences I’ve had at college so far,” Ferguson explained on her experience in the organization. “Being from a small town, I hadn’t been introduced to domestic violence issues and rape issues. Coming to Virginia Tech and being in S.A.V.E.S. has opened my eyes. I’ve also met a lot of new people that feel the same way as I do and want to see less violence on campus and in the United States.” In addition, S.A.V.E.S. strives for their educators to work as liaisons between students and the Women’s Center, an outlet for survivors of sexual assault. Peer educators make sure that students know that victims do have a place to come to for comfort, counseling, advice for judicial procedures.

Shaye had not previously been educated on sexual assault. As a result, she blamed herself for allowing the rape to occur. For the following months, she was plagued by nightmares and depression. She avoided friends and family and rarely left her apartment.

Two months after her ordeal, Shaye’s best friend urged her to tell her what had caused her drastic mood change. She listened with compassion, and luckily, had viewed a S.A.V.E.S. presentation on campus. She convinced Shaye to seek counseling at the Virginia Tech Women’s Center.

Although she never reported her rape to the police, Shaye has begun to heal from her experience through counseling and support. She was able to confront her attacker through a letter explaining how he had forever changed her life.

“He still may not think what he did was wrong. But now, finally, I have learned to deal with the truth,” Shaye explained. “I was raped. And it wasn’t my fault.”